

# **Committee on Resources**

## **Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans**

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### **Statement**

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**STATEMENT OF**  
**JAMIE RAPPAPORT CLARK, DIRECTOR,**  
**U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS**  
**HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**March 4, 1999**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the opportunity to present the President's Fiscal Year 2000 budget request for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Service's mission is, working with others, to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Our challenge is to find ways to accomplish our mission without unduly hampering people's ability to use their land for productive activity. The Administration has made major progress toward this with the development of Habitat Conservation Plans, Candidate Conservation Agreements, and Safe Harbor Agreements. However, the growing nationwide demand for the Service's assistance in drafting these plans has overburdened our existing resources. Further, we often find that a little extra help for these plans will go a long way toward developing a more comprehensive conservation strategy to better meet the needs of species. Some plans would benefit from additional land set aside for species habitat, others would be enhanced by funds for habitat restoration, and others require technical assistance during development and implementation. In the past, we have not been able to fully meet these growing needs of communities and states across the Nation.

With our budget proposal this year, we hope to meet them. We have proposed a programmatic increase of \$24 million for endangered species programs in Resource Management and an increase of \$66 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund for technical assistance and grants to states for HCP development, land acquisition, and other innovative programs. I hope to win your support for these increases, because I truly believe they are necessary to reconcile species needs with the economic desires of landowners and communities.

We could not accomplish our goals without the help of others. We do much of our work through partnerships with other federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal governments, international organizations, private organizations, and individual landowners. We are grateful for the contributions and commitment of these groups.

We recognize that much of our public support stems from the fact that the Nation's fish and wildlife resources provide the American people with a wide-range of cultural, recreational, educational, and economic benefits. Under federal trust responsibilities, the Service manages 516 National Wildlife Refuges, 66 National Fish Hatcheries, 38 Wetland Management Districts with waterfowl production, and 50 Coordination Areas, all of which encompasses over 93 million acres. Nearly 34 million visitors to the National Wildlife Refuge System enjoy unique opportunities for hiking, wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing. More than 290 refuges are open for hunting and 307 refuges are open for fishing. The National Fish Hatcheries annually distribute 163 million fish and 140 million fish eggs that help restore and enhance fish resources in partnership with state, local, and tribal governments. Nationwide, over 77 million outdoor enthusiasts spend over \$101 billion annually on their recreational activities, including an estimated 35 million anglers, 14 million hunters, and 63 million who engage in wildlife watching and photographing.

For FY 2000, the Service requests over \$1.5 billion, including more than \$950 million in current appropriations and over \$632 million in permanent appropriations. This is the largest amount ever requested for the Service. The request for direct appropriations is 18.4 percent over the FY 1999 enacted level.

### **Resource Management**

The FY 2000 request for the Resource Management appropriation, the Service's largest account, is \$724 million. This is an increase of \$62.9 million, or 9.5 percent, over the FY 1999 enacted level. The additional funding includes \$46.6 million for operational priorities, \$16 million for federal pay and retirement adjustments and other mandatory cost increases, and a \$300,000 transfer from the U.S. Geological Survey for operation and maintenance of the San Marcos National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center. The major increases are requested for our Endangered Species Act programs, partnership programs, refuge operations and maintenance, fish and wildlife assistance, and international conservation programs. Several cross program initiatives support Secretarial priorities, such as Restoring Habitat and Passage for Native Fish, Tundra to Tropics, and Coral Reef Protection Strategies.

For our Ecological Services programs, we are requesting \$198.8 million, a net increase of \$14.8 million over the FY 1999 enacted level. Within this increase, \$3.9 million is for scheduled federal pay and retirement adjustments, and \$11.1 million is for enhanced program operations. The major program increases will support a more effective Endangered Species Act, the most comprehensive of this Nation's environmental laws.

The Clinton Administration has used the flexibility of the ESA to work in cooperation with other public and private landowners to balance species protection with a strong economy. Our Candidate Conservation agreements assure non-federal landowners that they will not have to incur additional conservation measures if species are listed in the future. Our Safe Harbor agreements enable landowners to pursue economic development without jeopardizing critical habitat of threatened and endangered species. Both of these tools are designed to provide private landowners with incentives to work collaboratively with the Service towards the restoration of declining and listed species.

The Service is requesting an additional \$23 million to expand these successful ESA reforms. We have entered into 60 Candidate Conservation agreements with states, local governments and private landowners that have prevented the listing of 12 species. The additional \$2 million requested will help implement another 50 agreements that will help preclude the listing of 10 new species. For the Listing program, we need an additional \$1.2 million to address the increasing number of listing actions and litigation caseloads. Currently, we have 24 Notices of Intent to Sue, involving 151 species. We expect another 100 species will

be listed during FY 2000.

The additional \$7.3 million requested for the Consultation and Habitat Conservation Planning program in FY 2000 will help support as many as 500 HCPs that will allow economic development to proceed while protecting species. The HCPs in implementation and planning stages encompass over 11 million acres and cover 300 species. The Service also provides technical assistance to other federal agencies for resolving potential conflicts with listed and proposed species. The Service expects to review over 40,500 federal actions and conduct over 2,000 programmatic consultations through its streamlined consultation process.

For the Recovery program, we request an additional \$9 million to expand our Safe Harbor agreements, accelerate the development of recovery plans, and advance reclassification and delisting actions for listed species. Over 80 percent of the 1,136 listed species in the United States occur on private lands. Our innovative Safe Harbor agreements provide private landowners with assurances that voluntary conservation actions will enable economic development projects to be initiated or continued. Currently, we have 38 agreements, which cover 1.3 million acres. Another 26 agreements are pending. Our FY 2000 budget request will help enroll another 100 private landowners. About two-thirds of the listed species in the United States are covered by approved recovery plans. With our request, we will help to develop recovery plans for the remaining species, complete 10 proposals to downlist or delist species, and issue 15 final rules.

Other program increases that will protect species and their habitats are: \$2 million to reduce the conflicts over endangered species conservation and land use in the southwestern states of Arizona and New Mexico; \$100,000 to work with public and private landowners to develop candidate conservation plans to preclude the listing of species in the High Plains region; \$500,000 to expand protections for manatees in Florida; \$500,000 to enhance our support to tribal governments in developing resource management plans; and \$500,000 to help develop habitat conservation plans for 90 species in the Mojave Desert.

The Service also needs to expand our partnership work with public and private landowners on improving habitats for fish and wildlife. We are requesting \$1.5 million to support collaborative, cost-shared, and on-the-ground projects to restore habitat for imperiled wildlife and native fish; \$1.5 million to expand coastal expertise in Alaska, Hawaii, Texas, and the Great Lakes region, and work with partners to improve coastal habitats; \$650,000 in partnership assistance to restore riverine habitats and wetlands in the Mississippi River Basin area; and \$400,000 to restore grasslands in the High Plains region.

To complete an improved national wetlands status and trends report by December 2000, we need \$1.5 million. We also intend to provide with this funding accurate and timely information for watershed planning by federal, state, and local government agencies.

The Service also requests an additional \$1.7 million for work with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensees to improve fish passage and wildlife habitat for hydroelectric power developments at 250 dams. We need an additional \$1.3 million to assess planned restoration and water development projects in the San Francisco Bay-Delta area that affect 23 listed and 12 candidate species. Another \$600,000 is requested to provide technical assistance to the Forest Service on species management issues within the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

For the Environmental Contaminants program, we request an additional \$500,000 to assess the impacts of contaminants on the rapidly declining population of amphibians, and \$100,000 to address pollutant problems in the Mississippi River basin.

For Refuges and Wildlife, our FY 2000 request totals \$287.2 million to support refuge operations and maintenance, Salton Sea bioremediation and recovery, and migratory bird management. This is an increase of \$29.9 million over the FY 1999 enacted level, and represents a continuation of our commitment to restore and protect federal lands. This includes an additional \$24.3 million for program increases and \$5.7 million for federal pay and retirement adjustments.

Our budget proposes nearly \$264.3 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System, including \$211.6 million for refuge operations and \$52.7 million for refuge maintenance. For refuge operations, the proposed \$13 million increase will support 164 new projects at 167 refuges, including actions to combat invasive species, protect coral reefs, and conserve unique species and habitats in Alaska and Hawaii. The projects will help restore or improve nearly 42,000 acres of habitat, expand partnerships with public and private organizations, serve 150,000 additional visitors, and hire 87 refuge management, biological, and maintenance personnel and seven volunteer coordinators. The project priorities have been developed with the Refuge Operating Needs System, which ranks local projects against nation-wide goals and objectives.

For refuge maintenance, the additional \$9 million will support 337 deferred maintenance projects at over 200 refuges, based on nation-wide priorities identified within the Maintenance Management System and as part of the Department's Five Year Plan. The full refuge maintenance request will significantly reduce the backlog of priority maintenance projects, currently estimated at \$433 million for health, safety, natural resource protection, and other priority projects. The maintenance outlays for FY 1999 and FY 2000 combined will reduce the targeted backlog by 26 percent.

Our budget request provides an additional \$2.8 million for migratory bird management, including program increases of \$1.8 million to monitor and conserve a number of declining species; \$500,000 to fully implement recent amendments to the U.S.-Canada Migratory Bird Treaty regarding subsistence harvests for Alaska natives, as part of the Tundra to Tropics Initiative; \$300,000 as part of the Southwest Ecosystem Restoration; \$375,000 to support the Mississippi River Basin Partnership; and \$200,000 for controlling the over-abundance of Snow Geese populations, which are causing wide-spread habitat and agricultural damages. We are also requesting an additional \$288,000 to administer the increasing number of requests for migratory bird permits.

For Law Enforcement, the Service requests a total of \$39.9 million for FY 2000, nearly \$3 million more than the FY 1999 enacted level. The request includes \$1.7 million in program increases and \$1.3 million for scheduled federal pay and retirement adjustments. We need to strengthen our investigation and inspection capabilities, and work with private industries to reduce migratory bird losses from contaminants and electrocution.

The Service requests \$79.8 million for the Fisheries programs, a net increase of \$6.2 million over the FY 1999 enacted level. Our request will provide an additional \$2.5 million to help prevent and control the spread of non-indigenous aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, ruffe, round goby, Asian mitten crab, and brown tree snakes. Invasive alien species are causing wide spread ecological and economic damages. Other program increases include: \$1,175,000 for partnership projects for improving fish passage to spawning areas in the Mississippi River Basin and several other watersheds; \$700,000 for the conservation and recovery of native fish species in Arizona and New Mexico; \$600,000 to support the Atlantic Salmon Recovery Plan in Maine; and \$300,000 to determine the causes of sea otter declines around the Aleutian Islands.

For General Administration programs, the Service requests \$118.3 million for FY 2000, including \$5.1

million in program increases and \$3.6 million in federal pay and retirement adjustments and other mandatory cost increases. We request an additional \$3.4 million for International Affairs programs to strengthen the development and implementation of policies, agreements and projects to conserve wildlife across international boundaries. Our initiatives include involving states and tribal governments in CITES activities, streamlining our permits process to better support international trade, and enhancing international protections for neo-tropical migratory birds. We plan to work with other countries to identify potential invasive species and establish a permit program to preclude or control importation of such species. Other proposals will expand our cooperative agreements with Mexico and Russia. As part of our Restoring Habitat and Passage for Native Fish initiative, we request an additional \$ 1 million for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support its dams and rivers challenge grant program. Other program increases include \$600,000 for National Conservation Training Center operations and maintenance, \$200,000 for recruitment initiatives to attract a more diverse workforce, and \$100,000 to assure more timely resolution of EEO complaints.

### **Construction**

The FY 2000 request for the Construction appropriation totals \$43.6 million, a net reduction of \$6.8 million below the FY 1999 enacted level. Our request will provide \$35.5 million for 40 priority projects, such as dam and bridge improvements, at national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, and law enforcement facilities. The rehabilitation and replacement projects will address our most critical health, safety, and resource protection needs in our Five-Year Construction Plan, consistent with the Department's Safe Visits to Public Lands Initiative. The \$8.1 million for Nationwide Engineering Services includes an additional \$526,000 for federal pay and retirement adjustments.

### **Land Acquisition**

For FY 2000, the Service requests \$73.6 million for Land Acquisition, a net increase of \$25.6 million above the FY 1999 enacted level. Our request will provide \$60.9 million to acquire an estimated 118,400 acres on over 30 National Wildlife Refuges. Special focus areas include refuges in New England and along the Lewis and Clark Trail. Another \$3 million is requested for land exchanges, inholding acquisitions, and emergency acquisitions. The \$9.8 million for acquisition management includes \$526,000 for federal pay and retirement adjustments.

### **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund**

For FY 2000, the Service requests \$80 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, an increase of \$66 million above the FY 1999 enacted level. As part of the President's Lands Legacy initiative, the additional \$66 million is proposed to be made available from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and will make new tools available to states and local governments to help resolve conflicts between species needs and economic growth. The additional grant assistance will provide \$10 million to develop new Habitat Conservation Plans; \$18 million to develop and implement Candidate Conservation Agreements and Safe Harbor Agreements for protecting candidate, proposed, and listed species; and \$15 million for land acquisition to implement species recovery plans. Federal grant assistance to states for HCP land acquisition will increase to \$26 million, from \$6 million in FY 1999. The Service will provide technical assistance to states, helping them to develop HCPs, Candidate Conservation Agreements, and other species programs. The funding will also allow the Service to administer the grant programs and provide assistance to the states asking to apply for grants.

## Other Accounts

Our FY 2000 request for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund totals \$15 million, the same as the FY 1999 enacted level. The federal funds will generate an estimated \$30 million from partners to enable about 250,000 acres of wetlands to be acquired, restored, or enhanced in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

For the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, we request \$3 million for FY 2000, an additional \$1 million above the FY 1999 enacted level, to provide cost-sharing grant assistance to African and Asian nations for conserving elephants, rhinoceros, and tigers. The program increases will provide an additional \$500,000 for Asian elephant conservation programs and \$500,000 for rhinoceros and tiger conservation programs.

Our FY 2000 request for the National Wildlife Refuge Fund is \$10 million, a reduction of \$779,000 below the FY 1999 enacted level, for payments to counties in which national refuge and hatchery lands are located.

For the Wildlife Conservation and Appreciation Fund, we request \$800,000, the same level as enacted in FY 1999. The Fund provides matching grants to states for studies, education, recreation, and other activities related to the conservation of fish and wildlife species and their habitats.

In conclusion, the Service's FY 2000 budget reflects enhanced commitments by President Clinton and Secretary Babbitt to conserve and protect the Nation's fish and wildlife resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations of Americans. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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